

UWO loses Kerrigan; led campus during decade of success, global partnership

by News Bureau - Tuesday, November 06, 2012

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/22938/uwo-loses-kerrigan-led-campus-during-decade-of-success-global-partnership/>

John E. Kerrigan, Ph.D., Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh who led the institution through a period of remarkable academic achievement and success from 1990 to 2000 while forging ground-breaking educational partnerships at home and in countries around the globe, died November 5 in Dallas, Texas. He was 76.

John Kerrigan was the ninth Chancellor of UW Oshkosh. He was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin to Raymond and Eleanor Kerrigan on December 16, 1935. He attended Aquinas High School in La Crosse, WI. He married Patricia Maureen Ostrander on June 21, 1956 in La Crosse.

He is survived by his loving wife Patricia Kerrigan, his four children Maureen Kerrigan, Michael Kerrigan, Megan Yearout and Brian Kerrigan, and his ten grandchildren, Maxine Kerrigan, Jack Kerrigan, Katherine Kerrigan, David Kerrigan, Patrick Kerrigan, Kelsey Yearout, Nicholas Yearout, Zacharey Yearout and Abby Yearout; his sister Patricia McConaghy.

He is preceded in death by his father Raymond Kerrigan, his mother Eleanor Kerrigan, his brother Don Kerrigan, his sister Beverley Clements and his brother-in-law Donald McConaghy.”

Funeral services will be held at St. Raphael the Archangel Catholic Church, 830 S. Westhaven Drive, Oshkosh at 1 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 17. The family will be receiving visitors at the church beginning at 11 a.m.

The University is also planning a spring 2013 event within a UW Oshkosh sesquicentennial retrospective project that will honor Kerrigan’s service to the institution. Additional details will be shared in the months ahead.

Friends and colleagues of Kerrigan and his family are welcome to send thoughts and well wishes to: Pat Kerrigan, 13001 Hillcrest Road, Dallas, Texas 75240. Donations in lieu of flowers can be directed to St. Raphael the Archangel Catholic Church in Oshkosh.

“In John Kerrigan, our University, city, region, state, nation and educational communities around the globe had the privilege of working alongside and learning from a leader of purpose and dedication,” UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells said. “He was a human being driven by his passion to use education as a force for promoting cultural awareness, expanding economic prosperity and advancing human understanding. He will be greatly missed. However, his legacy lives on in the culture and thousands of members of our UW Oshkosh community and in the expanding educational communities he helped seed around the world.”

Kerrigan, who was also President Emeritus of Loras College, established a distinguished career in higher education, serving as a nationally recognized expert in public administration and an academic consultant to universities, educational associations and government agencies. His thirst for fostering international relationships, his passion for learning about foreign cultures and building partnerships abroad led him to establish thriving collaborations in Oman, Qatar, Slovakia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Morocco.

Kerrigan gave three years of service with The Ford Foundation as a specialist for the National Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in Amman, Jordan, and as administrative officer for the Ford Foundation in Beirut, Lebanon. He also has the distinction of having served as the first City Manager of Aspen, Colo.

His travels and leadership experiences in higher education were storied and diverse. In addition to his service at UW Oshkosh and Loras College, he held academic and administrative positions throughout the United States at the University of Colorado, University of Oregon, University of Nebraska Omaha and University of Houston-Downtown Campus. Kerrigan authored more than 50 articles and papers and co-authored a book entitled: Management Training Strategies for Developing Countries.

“I never get tired of traveling because I so enjoy learning about other countries,” Kerrigan said in a 2008 UW Oshkosh interview. “There is so much to be gained from visiting them.”

A record of distinction at UW Oshkosh

After his arrival at UW Oshkosh in 1990, Kerrigan wasted no time in making his own deep and lasting impact in the University’s reputation of academic excellence and innovation and on its value to the region and the state. Past UW Oshkosh examinations of his legacy have outlined his many successes, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Beginning in 1993, and based on private contributions, Kerrigan helped immediately and significantly expand endowed professorships with the University’s Endowment for Excellence.
- The \$1,000 Chancellor’s Academic and Leadership Scholarships, first offered to entering freshman in 1992, helped set a standard of growth and expansion in student support. After his retirement in 2000, the John and Pat Kerrigan Scholarship extended scholarship opportunities to second-year students with strong academic and leadership abilities.
- Kerrigan partnered with the Oshkosh and regional business community to examine and provide solutions to industrial and commercial problems. This economic-development collaboration evolved into the creation of the Center for Community Partnerships in 1997.
- Kerrigan launched UW Oshkosh’s Honorary Doctorate program in 1992, providing recognition and honor for individuals who demonstrate “significant civic, business and scholarly contributions” to the institution, community, region, state, nation and world. Since its inception, the honor has been bestowed upon national and global leaders within higher education, pioneers of American discovery and trailblazers in fields from journalism to sustainability and renewable energy.
- Under his leadership, for the first time ever, all of UW Oshkosh’s professional colleges earned professional accreditation.
- During his tenure, three UW Oshkosh faculty members and one department were recognized for excellence by the Board of Regents, a record unmatched within the UW System in that era.

Service continued after retirement

In September 2000, the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents officially recognized and honored Kerrigan's tenure as UW Oshkosh chancellor, in a resolution acknowledging his:

“Significantly increasing the level of private contributions to the University’s Foundation; Building strong relationships and partnerships with the University’s extended community, and enhancing ties between the University and vital external partners; Helping the University to receive the highest possible accreditation from the North Central Association, while also ensuring that all professional colleges achieved accreditation by the appropriate national organization; Encouraging the University to have a broader international focus and vision, through the establishment of a grants program and other cooperative partnerships with foreign institutions; Modernizing the campus’ physical plant, with significant capital projects now underway; and Improving the level of faculty, staff, and student access to new and emerging educational technologies...”

The recognition was by no means the end to a grand career. After retirement, Kerrigan's passion and commitment to higher education and international relations continued to flourish.

Kerrigan continued to serve as an academic consultant to universities, educational associations and government agencies. His special interest in developing countries, including those in the Middle East, continued to fuel his work.

Kerrigan was proud of his visiting more than 30 countries, many of them multiple times. As reported in a 2008 UW Oshkosh retrospective: “His first international assignment was in 1964, when he worked with the Ford Foundation on a project in Amman, Jordan. He served as a specialist for the National Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs before war broke out there in 1967. He and his wife, Pat, then moved their family to Beirut, Lebanon, where Kerrigan finished his three-year assignment.”

Kerrigan served as a consultant to more than a dozen universities. And, perhaps, his greatest success story was the one he co-authored with colleagues in the Sultanate of Oman. Kerrigan devoted years of his life to working with Sultan Qaboos University and the University of Nizwa, both in Oman. The two universities signed memorandums of understanding and have, together, since the Omani University's 2003 birth, nurtured Nizwa from an idea into a thriving educational community.

“We were hoping to have 400 students enroll in each of the first three years,” Kerrigan said in a 2008 interview. “But we were pleasantly surprised to have around 1,100 enroll each year...”

In less than a decade, Nizwa's student population has blossomed to nearly 8,000. Also of note: 85 percent of the enrolled students are female. Kerrigan once commented that this effort is “transforming the culture and the workplace” in Oman.

Last summer, the first wave of its students participated in the “Global Horizons” program, an initiative borne out of the long-lasting partnership and friendship that has existed between the two academic communities. University of Nizwa students visiting UW Oshkosh have benefitted from business courses

and cultural exchanges introducing them to the Wisconsin, the American Midwest and Washington D.C.

UW Oshkosh also continues to enjoy a strong nursing program connection with Chennai and New Delhi, India, the seeds for which were planted under Kerrigan's chancellorship.

In 2004, as another example of his selfless devotion to service in higher education, Kerrigan agreed to return to his alma mater, Loras in Dubuque, Iowa, and served for a two-year term as the college's interim president until a successor was hired.

Kerrigan remained an Oshkosh resident long after his retirement and, for several years, maintained an office on campus in Gruenhagen Conference Center at UW Oshkosh. His commitment to University fundraising and relationship-building remained strong. He helped the UW Oshkosh Foundation make calls on behalf of the University for the "Pride, Purpose, Promise" campaign, which concluded in December 2010. Kerrigan was also dedicated to the recruitment of effective UW Oshkosh Foundation board members.

He also stayed involved, acting as a natural role model for the civic engagement ethos that permeates campus academic programs and the UW Oshkosh community today. Kerrigan was a member of Rotary International and served as District 6270 governor from 1999 to 2000. He stepped up to help first-year chancellors learn about the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and intercollegiate athletics in general.

Kerrigan's commitment to establishing linkages and partnerships was also advanced through service on the board of the Midwest Higher Education Compact, which had him regularly collaborating with counterparts in 12 states, working together to improve student access to higher education, increase efficiencies and reduce operating costs. He also lent his leadership, insight and expertise to cultural and economic development organizations as varied as the Wisconsin Historical Society and Circus World Museum and, in Oshkosh, the Oshkosh YMCA, the Oshkosh Symphony, the Oshkosh Area United Way and CHAMCO, Inc., the city's industrial development agency.

While he savored each and every single example of service included in his resume, Kerrigan always cited his involvement in expanding education overseas as a cornerstone of his life's work.

"I am convinced that education, without a doubt, is the very best way to understand another culture and allow them to learn about ours," he said in 2008.

Read more:

- [Obituary: John E. Kerrigan](#)
- [Advance-Titan: Former Chancellor Kerrigan dies at 76](#)